

Dads Matter

Litigant in Person (LiP) Primer

Essential Guidelines & Templates for Family Court

Date: 2026

Representing yourself in Family Court as a **Litigant in Person (LiP)** is a daunting prospect, but you are not alone. Many fathers successfully navigate the system without a solicitor. The key to success is preparation, emotional discipline, and an unwavering focus on the welfare of your children.

This primer is designed to equip you with the essential behavioral guidelines and document templates required to present yourself as a credible, child-focused, and organized father in court.

1. Courtroom Etiquette: The Golden Rules

How you conduct yourself in the courtroom often speaks louder than the documents you submit. Judges are human; they respond well to respect, organization, and calm behavior.

- **Dress for Respect:** Wear a suit and tie, or at least smart office wear. Your appearance signals your respect for the court's authority.
- **Addressing the Judge:**
 - Magistrates: *"Sir"* or *"Madam"*
 - District/Circuit Judges: *"Judge"* or *"Your Honour"*
 - When in doubt, *"Sir"* or *"Madam"* is always safe and respectful.
- **Never Interrupt:** Never speak over the Judge, the other party, or their solicitor. Write down your points on a notepad and wait for your turn to speak.
- **Manage Your Emotions:** Family court is deeply personal, and you may hear things you strongly disagree with. Reacting with anger, eye-rolling, or sighing will damage your credibility. Take a deep breath and respond calmly.
- **Speak to the Judge:** Even when responding to something your ex-partner's solicitor said, direct your answer to the Judge. Do not argue directly with the other party across the room.

2. The Core Strategy: The Welfare Checklist

If you remember only one thing from this guide, make it this: **The court does not care about what is “fair” for you or the mother; the court only cares about what is best for the child.**

Under the Children Act 1989, judges must apply the **Welfare Checklist**. You must frame every argument, statement, and request around these points:

1. **The ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child** (considered in light of their age and understanding).
2. **The child’s physical, emotional, and educational needs.**
3. **The likely effect on the child of any change in their circumstances.**
4. **The child’s age, sex, background, and any characteristics the court considers relevant.**
5. **Any harm which the child has suffered or is at risk of suffering.**
6. **How capable each of the parents is of meeting the child’s needs.**
7. **The range of powers available to the court.**

Tip: When drafting a statement, explicitly link your requests to these points. For example, instead of saying “I have a right to see my son on weekends,” say “Regular weekend contact will support my son’s emotional need to maintain a strong bond with his paternal family (Checklist Point 2).”

3. Template: The Position Statement

A Position Statement is a short document (no more than 2-3 pages) handed to the judge and the other party shortly before a hearing. It briefly outlines what the hearing is about, what has happened recently, and what you are asking the judge to do today.

Structure of a Position Statement

**IN THE FAMILY COURT SITTING AT [TOWN/CITY]
IN THE MATTER OF THE CHILDREN ACT 1989
AND IN THE MATTER OF [CHILD'S FULL NAME]**

Case No: [Your Case Number]

BETWEEN:

[Your Name] (Applicant)

- and -

[Ex-Partner's Name] (Respondent)

**POSITION STATEMENT OF THE APPLICANT FATHER
For the hearing on [Date of Hearing]**

1. Background to this Hearing

- Briefly state why you are in court today (e.g., First Hearing Dispute Resolution Appointment).
- Mention current contact arrangements (e.g., "Currently, I am seeing the children for 2 hours every Saturday.").

2. The Father's Position

- Keep it factual, calm, and child-focused.
- Do not use this section to attack the other parent.
- *Example:* "It is my position that it is in the children's best interests to reinstate overnight stays, which they enjoyed prior to separation."

3. Response to CAFCASS / Other Reports (If applicable)

- Briefly state if you agree or disagree with any recent recommendations, keeping the Welfare Checklist in mind.

4. What the Father is Asking the Court to do Today

- Be highly specific.
- *Example:* "I respectfully ask the court to order progressing contact, leading to alternate weekend overnight stays within 4 weeks."

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this Position Statement are true.

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

4. Template: The Chronology

A Chronology is a simple timeline of key events. Judges love a good chronology because it helps them understand the history of the case quickly. Keep it factual and avoid emotional language.

Structure of a Chronology

IN THE FAMILY COURT SITTING AT [TOWN/CITY]

Case No: [Your Case Number]

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS PREPARED BY THE FATHER

Date	Event
14 May 2018	Parties were married.
02 Aug 2020	Child (Thomas) was born.
15 Jan 2024	Parties separated. Father moved out of family home.
Feb - Jun 2024	Father had contact every weekend by informal agreement.
12 Jul 2024	Mother stopped all contact.
30 Aug 2024	Father attempted mediation (MIAM). Mother declined to attend.
15 Sep 2024	Father submitted C100 application to the court.

Important Legal Disclaimer

This primer provides peer-to-peer guidance based on lived experience and should not be construed as professional legal advice. The **Dads Matter** network strongly encourages all fathers to seek the counsel of a qualified family law solicitor whenever possible.

Need further support?

Reach out to your local hub leader or visit our national website for more resources, forums, and guidance.

www.dadsmatter.org.uk